

References

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VI. Oral History Report

A. Introduction

The purpose of the Oral History component to the Uptown Historic Context Report was to record individual stories that might not otherwise be documented and to gain varied insight into the community and the individuals that make it up.

Two main types of interviews were conducted: group and individual. Susan Walter conducted one large group interview. Approximately thirty people attended the interview and at least seventeen of those attendees actively participated. The interview was videotaped and tape recorded, but no transcript was produced.

Three types of individual interviews were conducted. In the first set, Susan Walter conducted fourteen interviews that lasted approximately one to two hours each. Included in that total were two couples who were interviewed together. The interviews were tape recorded and transcripts were produced. Additionally, a separate individual interview was conducted by Mary Wendorf, a personal acquaintance of an interviewee who was unable to participate on her appointed date. The interview was not tape recorded, but a written summary was produced.

The second set of individual interviews was conducted as a prelude to the large group interview. Susan Walter conducted eight individual interviews that lasted approximately five minutes each. The interviews were videotaped, tape recorded, and transcripts were produced.

In the final set of interviews, Susan Walter conducted six interviews that lasted approximately one hour each. Included in that total was one couple who were interviewed together. The interviews were tape recorded and videotaped, but no transcript was produced.

B. Locating and Selecting Informants

Informants were solicited by:

Asking City staff for recommendations (several suggestions)

Sending requests to the churches in the area (no responses)

A magazine article describing the project and soliciting participation (one response)

A community meeting arranged by City staff (several recommendations by participants resulting in many of the transcribed interviews)

Word of mouth from informants previously interviewed (resulting in most of the extended individual interviews)

A group meeting arranged by Mission Hills community activist Mike Singleton (resulting in the short individual interviews)

All potential informants, except for the attendants of the group interview, were contacted by telephone. Contacts were asked preliminary questions at that time. Preliminary questions included: whether the informant had a long term association with the project area, whether the informant had expertise with a particular subject relevant to the area or whether the informant was a member of a minority group—including religious, gender based, ethnic or even occupational. Contacts were also asked their first impressions of the area and how it has changed. Informants ranged from having lived in the study area all of their lives to, in one case, never having resided in Uptown but having specific expertise in the area.

Informants were chosen on an individual basis for the following reasons:

Bob & Betty Baker: Betty's father ran the Ace Drug Store, a pivotal business in Uptown, for 42 years. Robert and Betty Baker are married.

Charles Beyer: Moved to University Heights in 1930.

Will Chandler: Art and architectural historian, former curator of the San Diego Museum of Art, familiar with the built environment and has knowledge of the gay and lesbian community.

Pat Comer: Born in Mercy Hospital, has intimate knowledge of the area; son of a doctor and real estate agent.

Scott Crowder: Has lived in Uptown since the third grade, has owned several businesses in the area.

Estelle Dunst: Attended Temple Beth Israel for 65 years. Estelle is married to Lou Dunst.

Lou Dunst: Born in Czechoslovakia, survived five years in concentration camps, moved to Uptown and worked door to door sales. Lou is married to Estelle Dunst.

Simone Kirkland: Born in France, married a U.S. serviceman, has owned and managed several rental properties.

Phil Klauber: Part of one of San Diego's "Old" families, has traveled the world as an engineer.

Sister Mary La Salette Trevillian: Has had a long time association with Mercy Hospital as a Catholic nun.

Craig Noel: Decades of experience in Old Globe Theatre grew up in the area.

Caesar & Julie Oriok: Mexican Americans, both long term residents of Mission Hills.

Anne Prusa: Has lived in the same Uptown house for several decades.

Marvin Randall: Attended Catholic school in the area. Married to Tayde Randall.

Tayde Randall: Born in Mexico, long time resident of the area. Married to Marvin Randall.

Stanley Schwartz: Jewish historian; has written a history of the Temple Beth Israel.

Eloise Sherfey: Long term resident of Uptown, described the origins of her house.

Eldon & Annella Smith: Pastor and wife of the Swedenborgian Church.

Gary Wong: His parents were Chinese immigrants who ran a successful restaurant.

Chuck Zito: Runs an LGBT theatre and is familiar with the theatre's history.

Stephen Zolezzi: Part of one of San Diego's pioneering Italian fisherman family, he has run four popular restaurants in the Uptown area.

Informants for the group interview were compiled from contacts made through the community planning groups from the case study area.

Informants for the shorter individual interviews were chosen from the group interview attendees. Group interview participants filled out questionnaires (See Section I) and participants who resided in Uptown the longest were asked to stay for short individual interviews.

C. Transcripts

The transcripts are the most valuable aspect of this project. The transcripts allow the information to be readily available to anyone who can read, with no machinery required for access. Furthermore, current state of the art technology will become obsolete. A printed document will always be accessible. Finally, the transcript gives the informant a chance to correct mistakes made during the interview or during transcription. Also, it allows the informants control over which aspects of their private lives are displayed to the public..²

Informants involved in the longer interviews were assured that they could review and edit their transcripts before the information was released. In several cases, this proviso was central in obtaining consent for an interview. The videotaped interviews and the group interview were not transcribed because of the tremendous amount of time required to do so and the limited amount of time involved in the project.

D. Summary

The selected informants represent a cross section of the diverse residents of Uptown. Twelve women and nineteen men were interviewed individually. Both married and single informants were involved. Two members of the Gay and Lesbian Community were interviewed. Interviewees ranged in background and affiliation, including Mexican, Italian, Irish, Chinese, German, French, and Czechoslovakian. Religious denominations of the informants also varied. Members of the Jewish, Catholic, Methodist, other Protestant, and Swedenborgian faiths as well as agnostics all participated. The informants' careers included accounting, aerospace work, door to door sales, drug store/hardware store work, engineering, hairstyling, historical archivist, homemaker, hospital work, laundry work, law enforcement, military, museum curator, postmaster, real estate agent, religious ministry, landlord, restaurant work, retail work, school administration, science, tailoring, teaching, theatre, and more.

² It is important that the videotaped interviews be transcribed so the information generously shared by the informants can be made accessible. Dennis Sharp, Oral Historian for the San Diego Historical Society, has stated that the transcripts will be produced once the videotapes are conveyed to the Historic Society. In light of the fact that the transcription will be done by volunteers, the exact time the transcripts will be completed is unknown. Susan Walter will be available to contact informants and make corrections on the transcripts once they are completed.

Oral History Report

In total, thirty people were both transcribed or video taped and approximately seventeen additional persons took part in the videotaped group discussion. One informant was unable to be interviewed on the date scheduled, but her friend agreed to interview her and donate her research to this project. At least 48 informants actively participated in this project.

E. Group Interview

The Group Interview was conducted on July 14, 2003, in a meeting room of the Mission Hills United Methodist Church, located at 4044 Lark Street. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 people and at least 17 of the attendees actively participated. Everyone was photographed. A brief questionnaire was distributed to all the participants; not everyone returned them. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder, played at regular speed. The tape recording was transcribed by Rachael Van Wormer. Susan Walter edited the transcript. Additionally, the interview was videotaped by Stephen Van Wormer on a Sony 120X digital Super Steady Shot video camera.

The interview was conducted in a group discussion format and the major topic addressed was Mission Hills. Topics of discussion within the area of Mission Hills included:

- Ace Drug Store
- Cemeteries
- First female mathematician in the National Academy of Sciences
- Grant School
- Gregory Peck
- Italians and Portuguese relocation to Mission Hills because 5 freeway was built
- Kate Sessions' house and nursery
- Melborn Construction
- Myths of the neighborhood
- Names of several builders and architects
- Sidewalk history (backwards lettering in some areas, etc.)
- Soil brought in from dredging Mission Bay
- Trolley lines
- Washington Canyon tennis court
- "Washington Street Freeway"

The following is a complete list of the Group Interview attendees:

Betty Baker	Allen Hazard	Janet O'Dea
Rich Bellows	Bill Hillman	Caesar Oriol
William Caldwell	Helen Hillman	Scott Sandel
Judy Carter	Edie Hunt	Mike Singleton
Joan Crone	Bob Landry	Mike Stepner
Steve Ewalt	Dominic Martina	Marguerite Stitt
Jacque Lynn Foltyn	Erin Matthews	Arlene Van de Wetering
Chuck Fox	Laurence Miller	Grace Wilson
Sharon Gehl	Vera Miller	Enid Wright
Jane Haubert	Patricia Molyneaux	